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# ENG 2601-001: Backgrounds in Western Literature

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**English 2601-001—Backgrounds in Western Literature  
Fall 2009**

Dr. Campbell  
CH 3572, 581-6974  
Office hours TTH 12:30-2:00pm; W 12:00-1:00pm;  
and by appointment

TTH 9:30-10:45am  
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**Texts**

Sophocles, *The Theban Plays*  
Lawall and Mack. *Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces*, Vol. 1, 7<sup>th</sup> ed.  
Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing*

**Course Description**

This course is designed to provide an introduction to literary works considered central to the development of western literature. Writers throughout the centuries have responded to and incorporated aspects of works by their predecessors and their contemporaries into their own “new” creations. In this course we will especially explore various lines of artistic and topical influence that stretch from classical origins through literary works of the Renaissance. We will observe how ideas are adopted and adapted to suit the cultural and political times of the writers. Furthermore, we will discuss our own early twenty-first-century impressions of these works, addressing such questions as the following: What seems familiar or contemporary to us about these writers regarding their social milieu, their historical moments, and their texts? Why have these texts been so influential for so long? Why do they still fascinate? How should we, reading several of these texts in translation, think about the transitions they have gone through regarding the practices of translating and editing? Above all, by the end of the course you should have a greater understanding of the literary periods and genres of the western literary canon, as well as a sense of the historical shaping of some of your own ideas and values.

**Policies**

--The English Department statement on plagiarism stipulates that any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—“The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author and representation of them as one's original work” (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of NC for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.

--Hand assignments in on time. If you're having problems, let me know. Papers more than two class days late without a university-approved excuse will not be accepted. If you miss an exam, and you have a university-approved excuse, you may make up that exam. You will have no more than one week to do so, and the make-up exam will be different from the one given during class.

--If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

--Be prepared for class. You'll get a lot more out of class discussions if you are participating in them, and I'll notice if you do not seem prepared to participate.

## Requirements

--Three exams . . . . .	45% (15% each of final grade)
--One 7-10-page research paper . . . . .	20%
--Preliminary research report with annotated bibliography . . . . .	15%
--Response writings . . . . .	20%
Total:	100%

The **three exams** will cover the three units of study: the Ancient World, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance, respectively; however, there may be interplay between these periods in our discussions and in the test questions.

The **paper** topic will be chosen from the assigned texts and issues related to them. I will give you a list of possible topics and/or areas of study to consider early in the semester because you will be expected to select a topic and begin research early on. The paper will be 7-10 pages long. You will use at least 3-5 secondary sources to support your arguments regarding your primary sources, and they should consist of scholarly books, journal articles, and Internet sources of well-known scholarly repute (**You may not cite Wikipedia**). You will use MLA Parenthetical Style, with a Works Cited page, for documentation. After midterm, you will have a **research report with an annotated bibliography** due to show the progress that you have made regarding your research project. At some point after that, you should schedule a **conference over a rough draft** of the paper. Do not worry that we haven't covered the topic that interests you in class by the time you start your research—this portion of our study is meant to be independent exploration of a topic that may be completely new to you. The goal is that your independent study will augment what is covered in class and will broaden the scope of the course as a whole for you.

The **preliminary research report and annotated bibliography** will cover the research that you begin for your research paper and presentation. The report will address the topic, why you chose the topic, and the avenues of research that you chose to explore. The annotated bibliography will consist of bibliographic citations of at least five sources with your notes on each work that describe the document, summarize why it may be useful to your project, and include possible quotations that you might use in the paper.

The **response writings** will be concerned with specific reading assignments.

## Tentative Schedule

Note: Readings may be shifted around during the semester to accommodate class discussion.

### *The Ancient World*

T. Aug. 25— Introduction to course.

**Read *Antigone*.** (Note: Always read your text's introduction to each author or section.)

Th. Aug. 27— *Antigone*.

T. Sept. 1—*Antigone*.

**Read** *Lysistrata*.

Th. Sept. 3—*Lysistrata*.

T. Sept. 8— *Lysistrata*.

**Read** *Medea*.

Th. Sept. 10—*Medea*.

T. Sept. 15— *Medea*

Th. Sept. 17—Catch-up day. Review for Exam I.

T. Sept. 22— Exam I.

**Read** *Inferno*

### ***The Middle Ages***

Th. Sept. 24—Introduction to Medieval Period. Begin *Inferno*.

T. Sept. 29—*Inferno*.

**Read** *Decameron*

Th. Oct. 1—*Decameron*.

T. Oct. 6—*Decameron*.

**Read** *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

Th. Oct. 8— *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

T. Oct. 13—*Sir Gawain*.

**Read** “Lanval” and “Laüstic”

Th. Oct. 15— “Lanval” and “Laüstic”

T. Oct. 20—“Lanval” and “Laüstic.”

Th. Oct. 22—Catch-up day. Review for Exam II.

T. Oct. 27—Exam II.

**Read** Petrarch and Sonnet handout.

### ***The Renaissance***

Th. Oct. 29—Introduction to Renaissance. **Discuss papers/topics and the preliminary research report.** Begin Petrarch.

T. Nov. 3—Petrarch and Sonnet Handout.

**Read** selections from *The Courtier* and *The Prince*

Th. Nov. 5—selections from *The Courtier* and *The Prince*

**Preliminary reports with annotated bibliographies are due.**

Read: *Othello*

T. Nov. 10—Finish *Courtier* and *Prince*. Begin *Othello*

Th. Nov. 12—*Othello*

Read: *Much Ado*

T. Nov. 17—Finish *Othello*; start *Much Ado*

Th. Nov. 19—*Much Ado*

T. Nov. 24—Thanksgiving.

Th. Nov. 26—Thanksgiving

T. Dec. 1—*Much Ado*

Th. Dec. 3—*Much Ado*

T. Dec. 8—Catch-up day. **Research papers are due.**

Th. Dec. 10—Review for Exam III (Final).

**Final Exam (Exam III):** Wed., Dec. 16, 8:00-10:00am.